

Schoenberg, Composer, Dies at 76; His Atonal Music Caused a Furor

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LOS ANGELES, July 14—Arnold Schoenberg, composer and teacher, who invented the controversial twelve-tone system in music, died at his home in suburban Brentwood, late last night at the age of 76. He had been ill for some time and only last month canceled a teaching engagement because of his health.

A revolutionary in the music field, Mr. Schoenberg, who became a United States citizen in 1940, was recognized as a leading composer. However, he himself felt that many years, possibly fifty, would be required before he would be completely understood, basing his view on the delayed appreciation of famous compositions of other leaders.

About the lively diminutive and intellectual figure of Arnold Schoenberg the wildest storms of twentieth-century music raged. Hostile demonstrations marked most of the first performances of his work. Pitched polemical bat-



Arnold Schoenberg

— as fiercely favoring his revolutionary atonal twelve-tone compositions as opposing—swept central Europe in the early Nine-

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teen Hundreds and then, in turn, the rest of the musical world.

Yet at his death there were few—no matter how little they warmed to his music itself—who could deny either the importance of his influence or that he was a great musical theorist and teacher. And there were many voices who predicted that the Austrian composer's music would finally be accepted in much the same way as the later work of Stravinsky and the compositions of Bela Bartók.

It was Schoenberg's contention that the old dynamic laws of music, tonic to dominant to tonic, were no longer valid, that the next natural step in music was the breaking away from the established harmonic rules and the formulation of a twelve-tone system, by which all twelve tones of the chromatic scale were of equal value.

This revolutionary type of formal structure consists primarily in the use of a "basic series," comprised of all of the twelve tones, with none repeated. The tones may be placed in order and at any intervals desired, and from this series all of the themes are derived. Regular recourse to the contrapuntal devices of inversion, "canzicrans" (reversal) and others are essential features of the polyphonic structure, and symmetrical patterning is banned.

Method Called Artificial

Many have protested that such a method of composition is self-conscious and artificial. But the composer and his followers asserted that the twelve-tone composition existed in practice before it was developed in theory.

It is of interest to note that the term, "atonality" to describe the Schoenbergian school of composition—which was given to the music by the composer's opponents—has never been accepted by him, since atonality in music, as he once remarked, is an impossibility. The composer went on to point out that his music had tones like any other and that it was the arrangement that made the difference. He preferred his method to be known merely as a system of composing with twelve tones.

Mr. Schoenberg also maintained that none of his works was at variance with the principles taught by the old masters and that ultimately it will be their music which will prove how right his path has been.

One American estimate of the work the composer was trying to accomplish appeared as early as January, 1913. At that time the noted critic, James Gibbons Huneker, who had heard the first performance of Schoenberg's important "Pierrot Lunaire" in Europe and had subsequently studied his published scores, wrote the following in THE NEW YORK TIMES:

"His mission is to free harmony from all rules. A man doesn't hit on such combinations, especially in his acrid instrumentation, without heroic labors. His knowledge must be enormous, for his scores are as logical as a highly-wrought mosaic; that is, logical, if you grant him his premises. He is perverse and he wills his music, but he is a master in delineating certain moods, though the means he employs revolts our ears."

Arnold Schoenberg was born in Vienna on Sept. 13, 1874. Attracted to music from his earliest years, he already played the violin by the

time he was 12 and had composed a number of duets for the instrument. He later taught himself the 'cello and composed several trios and a quartet for a group of school mates with whom he played chamber music.

His father died during his boyhood and left the youth in impoverished circumstances, but he persisted in his self-study of music. He remained entirely untaught in composition until a friend showed some of his work to Alexander von Zemlinsky, who knew Brahms and was considered an authority. Zemlinsky offered to teach him counterpoint, the only musical instruction Schoenberg ever received.

At the age of 23, in quite needy circumstances, the young composer made a piano arrangement of Zemlinsky's opera, "Sarema," and then composed a string quartet, which along with a number of his songs, was presented in Vienna. Many of these stirred opposition.

In 1899 he composed the sextet for strings, "Verklärte Nacht," one of his few works to achieve any real popularity. The sextet clearly reveals the composer's strong romantic strain springing from such of his acknowledged masters as Brahms, Wagner and Mahler.

The next year he began work on his "Gurre-Lieder" in Vienna and by 1901 they had been sketched completely. The orchestration, however, was constantly interrupted by the scoring of operettas of other composers—6,000 pages in all—so that he might meet his day-to-day debts.

At about this time he married Mathilde von Zemlinsky, the sister of his friend, and soon left Vienna for Berlin in hopes of improving his fortunes.

Taught at Conservatory

On the basis of the score of the first part of his "Gurre-Lieder," Richard Strauss used his influence to obtain a teaching position and a scholarship for Mr. Schoenberg at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin.

In 1903 the composer returned to Vienna, where he made the friendship of Gustav Mahler, then a power in the musical life of that city, who thought highly of him and the future, even though he did not wholly accept all of the youth's transformations.

It was through the assistance of the older composer that many of Mr. Schoenberg's compositions were performed in Vienna. These include his first string quartet in D minor, the "Kammersymphonie," the symphonic poem, "Pelleas und Melisande," after Maeterlinck; the "Songs for Orchestra," the second string quartet, the "George-Lieder" and the Pieces for Piano.

It is with these compositions that Mr. Schoenberg marked his steady movement away from tonality and began his groping search for the new form which finally developed into the twelve-tone system.

In 1911, Mr. Schoenberg removed to Berlin once more and began to teach privately. There gathered about him a small group of enthusiastic pupils, many of whom later became famous in their own right, the most prominent among them being Alban Berg. Some of the others included Anton von Webern, Egon Wellesz, Karl Horwitz, Heinrich Jalowitz and Erwin Stein.

During the first World War the composer was called to service twice, but, being over 40, did only garrison duty in Vienna and after a time was excused from this. In 1925 he was invited to assume the chair in Berlin that had been occupied by Busoni.

Mr. Schoenberg remained in

Berlin until May, 1933, when he left of his own accord because of Hitler's oppression of the Jews. In November he came to the United States to teach at the Malkin Conservatory in Boston, eventually settling in Los Angeles, where he taught at the University of California until his retirement in 1944. He continued to teach privately after his retirement and usually had about eight pupils.

Important Schoenberg compositions not previously mentioned include his operas, "Erwartung," "Die Glueckliche Hand," and "Von Heute auf Morgen"; his Quintet for Winds, Variations for Organ, Variations for Wind Band, Second Chamber Symphony and "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte." His "A Survivor from Warsaw" was played last season by the Philharmonic-Symphony, conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos.

In 1947, Mr. Schoenberg was the recipient of the Award of Merit for Distinguished Achievement given by the National Institute of Arts and Letters to "an eminent foreign artist, composer or writer living in America." The award carried a \$1,000 prize.

The composer's first wife died in 1923. They had two children, Mrs. Gertrud Greissle and Georg. In August, 1924, he married Gertrud Kolisch, the sister of the well-known violinist, Rudolf Kolisch, who was once one of his pupils. They had three children, Nuria, Ronald and Lawrence.